

UA 435/94

Ill-treatment / Fear for Safety

7 December 1994

**PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA** Chen Pokong (30) and other prisoners at *Guangzhou*  
*No. 1 Reeducation-Through-Labour Center*

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Chen Pokong, a pro-democracy activist detained in a labour camp in Guangdong Province, has alleged, in a letter of appeal to the international community, that prisoners in the labour camp are often beaten and subjected to conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The letter, which is said to have been smuggled out of the camp a few months ago, was publicised recently.

It is feared that the ill-treatment of prisoners described in the letter may be continuing in the labour camp and that Chen Pokong may be punished and subjected to further ill-treatment for smuggling out the letter.

Chen Pokong, who had been previously imprisoned for his pro-democracy activities, was sentenced in October 1993, without trial, to two years of "reeducation through labour" for "illegally crossing state borders". He was sent to carry out the sentence at the *Guangzhou No 1 Reeducation-Through-Labour Center*, a forced-labour camp in Hua county, Guangdong province.

According to his letter, "production quotas" in the labour camp are set so high that prisoners have to work over 14 hours a day, seven days a week, with only three days holiday a year during the annual Spring Festival. During the day, they carry out heavy labour in a stone quarry, transporting and loading stones into boats; at night, they make artificial flowers which are sold for export. Prisoners who do not meet their production quotas are liable to have their sentence lengthened, Chen Pokong says.

"Inmates who labour slightly slower are brutally beaten and misused by supervisors and team leaders (themselves inmates). Inmates are often beaten until they are blood-stained all over, collapse or lose consciousness (shortly before I was sent here, one inmate was beaten to death)...Several times I was beaten by the team leader. I am constantly exposed to terror", Chen Pokong states.

He describes injured and sick prisoners being forced to work despite their illnesses. "Many inmates, including myself, their hands and feet squashed by big stones, stained with blood and pus, have to labour as usual. As a consequence, many inmates were crippled for life." He also describes harsh living conditions, with prisoners being given insufficient food, mainly consisting of coarse rice and rotten vegetables, and medical treatment being practically non-existent.

Chen Pokong concludes his letter by saying, "I understand that once my letter is published, I might be persecuted even more harshly. I might even be killed. But I have no choice!"

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Chen Pokong, also known as Chen Jingsong, was a teacher in the economics department of Zhongshan University, in Guangzhou city, when the 1989 pro-democracy protests started in China. He was arrested in August 1989 for his activities during the protests and charged in February 1990 with "carrying out counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement". On 1 March 1991, he was

sentenced to three years' imprisonment on this charge by the Guangzhou City Intermediate People's Court.

Following his release in July 1992, Chen Pokong resumed his political activities and, according to his letter, by August 1993 he was again wanted by the authorities. Fearing re-arrest, he fled to Hong Kong where he applied for political asylum, but his application was denied and he was deported back to China on 1 September 1993. Upon his forcible return, he was placed in police custody and on 20 October 1993 he was sentenced to two years of "reeducation-through-labour" for "illegally crossing the borders".

"Reeducation through labour" is an administrative punishment imposed without any judicial process which involves detention for up to three years, usually in a labour camp. This punishment is imposed by administrative committees composed of representatives from the public security (police), civil affairs and labour departments of the local governments of cities and provinces. Those thus sentenced have no trial, no access to lawyers and no right to defend themselves.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/airmail letters in English or your own language:**

- expressing concern that Chen Pokong and other prisoners held at the Guangzhou No. 1 Reeducation Through Labour Center in Guangdong Province are reported to have been ill-treated and to be held in conditions which amount to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment;
- urging that their treatment and conditions be impartially investigated, that the result of the investigation be made public and that those found responsible be brought to justice;
- expressing concern that Chen Pokong is reported to be detained in connection with his peaceful pro-democracy activities and that he has been sentenced to two years' detention in a labour camp without being charged or tried; urging the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally unless he is charged with recognizable criminal offences in accordance with international standards and given a fair and open trial.

**APPEALS TO**

Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China

XIAO Yang Buzhang

Sifabu

Xianguangli

Beijingshi 100016, People's Republic of China

**Telexes: 210070 FMPC CN or 22478 MFERT CN (Please forward to Xiao Yang Buzhang)**

**Faxes: + 861 467 7351**

**Telegrams: Minister of Justice Xiao Yang, Beijing, China**

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Governor of the Guangdong Provincial People's Government

ZHU Senlin Shengzhang

Guangdongsheng Renmin Zhengfu

305 Dongfeng Zhong Lu

Guangzhoushi 510031

Guangdongsheng, People's Republic of China

**Telexes: 44563 OFAGDCN**

**Faxes: + 86 20 861569**

**Telegrams: Governor Zhu Senlin, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China**

**Salutation: Dear Governor**

Chief Procurator of the Guangdong Provincial People's Procuratorate

YU Wanning Jianchazhang

Guangdongsheng Renmin Jianchayuan

26 Cangbian Lu

Guangzhoushi 510090

Guangdongsheng, People's Republic of China

**Telegrams: Chief Procurator of the Provincial People's Procuratorate Wang Jun,  
Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China**

**Salutation: Dear Chief Procurator**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China in your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, of your Section office, if sending appeals after 18 January 1995.